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ABSTRACT

Institutional research in Western Europe was analyzed in the context of the changing relationship between higher education and the central government. Questionnaires concerning institutional research activities were sent to colleges in 16 countries, and usable responses were returned by 48 institutions, almost half of which were located in Denmark, the Netherlands, or the United Kingdom. A lot of institutional research activity was performed, but not in an organized manner. In most cases, the activities supported institutional decision-making or planning, but they were not recognized as a separate institutional function. The main task of the persons performing the activities was different from institutional research. In Western European higher education systems, institutional research is divided not only horizontally among various offices of the institutional administrations, but also vertically among the three broad levels of the higher education systems. Institutional research seems to have emerged in countries with expenditure-driven higher education policies. For countries with demand-led policies, institutional research organizational and structural settings differ the most from those in North America. (SW)

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THE EMERGENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN WESTERN EUROPE

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Ann K. Dickey, Chair
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THE EMERGENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN WESTERN EUROPE

ABSTRACT

The relationship between higher education and government in Western Europe is changing. The results of a pilot-study on the practice of institutional research in Western Europe are analyzed in the context of this changing relationship.

INTRODUCTION

In his examination of the development of institutional research over the past twenty-five years Peterson (1985) has pointed to the internationalization of institutional research since the middle of the last decade. A growing number of people from outside the United States became interested in this kind of research. This manifested itself among other things in the growing number of non-Americans that became a member of the Association for Institutional Research (AIR). In membership year 1984-1985 more than sixteen percent of the members of AIR came from outside the United States. Of this group about 35 percent came from Europe (AIR Directory 1985-1986, 1985).

The European AIR branch with its own annual meetings shows some remarkable characteristics. In the first place over 90 percent of the European members of AIR are coming from the northwestern part of Europe, i.e. the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In the second place the European members of AIR and the European attendants to the AIR forums are not institutional researchers in the strict sense. Most of them are either institutional executives or high-level staff members instead of institutional researchers. In the third place with the exception of the two aspects mentioned above very little is known about the practice of and actual interest in institutional research in the European higher education systems. There is no literature available that describes the institutional research activities that were performed within European universities.

In the volume of "New Directions for Institutional Research" that

coincided with the twenty-fifth annual forum of AIR (Peterson and Corcoran, 1985), institutional research was characterized as a field of practice, a profession and an association. This is true for the status of institutional research in North America. In the North American field of higher education institutional research is recognised for at least twenty-five years as a separate administrative function. A similar recognition did not occur in Europe. This circumstance has important consequences for the status of institutional research in Europe and for the status of the European AIR branch. As mentioned above, very little is known about the practice of institutional research in Europe and to all appearances, although this conclusion might be premature, there seems to be no professional group of institutional researchers in Europe. If the latter is true then the European AIR affiliation doesn't represent a profession, in the way the AIR represents the institutional research profession in North America.

If the European AIR affiliation wants to become an affiliation with its own identity, some important steps should be taken. In the first place the limited knowledge about the practice of the field in Europe should be enlarged. In the second place on the basis of this enlarged knowledge base the familiarity with and the use of institutional research in Europe must be stimulated. Only when this occurs a separate professional group of institutional researchers can develop in Europe.

The above-mentioned considerations underlie a research-project on "Institutional research in Western Europe" initiated in 1985 under auspices of the Dutch Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS). The first purpose of this research-project is the enlargement of the knowledge base on the practice of institutional research in Western Europe. The second purpose is the analysis of the differences between the American higher education system on the one hand and the various European systems on the other hand and the consequences of these differences for the difference in status of institutional research on both sides of the ocean. The third purpose is the detection of the expected developments with respect to the use of institutional research in Western Europe. On the basis of this an assessment will be made of the (professional) needs of European institutional researchers. The needs assessment will be made at a later stage of the project. This paper centres on the results of the first part of the project: a pilot-study on the practice of institutional research in Western Europe.

An important assumption in this paper is that institutional research-like activities are performed, whether institutionalized or not, within every higher education organization. They are part of the adaptation process that takes place within every organization, because in order to survive every organization must adjust to external change and

uncertainty, and take care of internal continuity (Miles and others, 1978). From this viewpoint institutional research acts as an intermediary function between on the one hand the management of a higher education organization and the organization-environment, and on the other hand between the organization-management and the internal processes of the organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTATION

As mentioned above institutional research can be considered as an instrument in organizational adaptation. In the organization literature the central discussion with respect to the topic of organizational adaptation is concentrated on the question whether organizational adaptation is derived from inescapable environmental forces, or whether it is a reflection of free managerial choice and selection (Astley and Van de Ven, 1983). Hannan and Freeman (1977) talk about this contrast in terms of the dominancy of voluntarism or external determinism. Our starting point is that these two explanations of organizational adaptation don't exlude each other. They are both independent variables that can be used in analyzing organizational adaptation (Hrebeniak and Joyce, 1985).
The consequence of this for adaptation processes in higher education institutions is that central decisionmakers in higher education institutions can make choices in decision-making circumstances, but the margins within which they have to make their choices in these circumstances are determined by the organizational environment. The role of institutional research in these processes is to support the decision-makers on the one hand by providing relevant research and analysis on the performance of the institution, and on the other hand by investigating the changes in the environment of the institution and their consequences for the actual and future performance of the institution. Only when central decision-makers know what the important changes are that take place in the environment of their institution and know what goes on in their institution, it is possible for them to take justified choices concerning the necessary adjustment steps that must be taken if the institution wants to survive all the environmental changes.

The research-questions for the CHEPS-project on "Institutional research in Western Europe" were derived from the viewpoint explained above. In this paper the attention is focused upon the environmental aspects of organizational adaptation. Peterson and Corcoran (1985) describe a new

environmental reality with important implications for institutional research. With respect to this new reality we restricted ourselves to the (changing) relationship between government and higher education, because of the fact that the machinery of the state can, certainly in Western Europe, be regarded as a central tool in creating the margins of choice for the central decision-makers in higher education organizations (Clark, 1983, p.136). The implications of the changing educational environment and of the developments in information technology for the field and the profession of institutional research in Western Europe will come up for discussion in a later stage of the research-project.

In view of the above this paper has two primary purposes: the first is to provide some information about the practice of institutional research in Western Europe; the second is to set this information in the context of the relationship between the (central) government and higher education in the countries in question.

INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA SOURCE

The central part of the questionnaire that was designed within the framework of the pilot-study consisted of a list of institutional research categories. This list was based on an AIR questionnaire that was used to identify the AIR members that were willing to have their names placed on a consultant list. The categories and activities mentioned on the list represented different areas of what is considered in North America as institutional research.
The 62 categories on our list were divided into nine categories. These categories were:

1. Planning / Decision-making / Organizational Processes
2. External relations
3. Administration / Faculty / Staff
4. Student-admissions / Enrollment
5. Student-concerns
6. Budget and Finance
7. Information Technology for Institutional Management
8. Facilities / Space Utilization / Scheduling
9. Academic Programs

The respondents were asked to indicate on the list the activities which were recently (in the past three years) performed within their institution. Supplementary to the list some questions were included in the questionnaire concerning the characteristics of the respondents, of

the institutions and of the countries involved. After testing the questionnaire some improvements were made.
In the spring of 1985, the questionnaire was mailed to 137 institutions in sixteen Western European countries (1). Half of the institutions involved were selected ad random. The rest were selected on the basis of the fact that one or more of its employees had shown to be interested in institutional research. This interest was expressed in a membership of AIR and/or in an attendance at one or more AIR forums. Approximately 45% of the mailed institutions (N= 62) reacted to the questionnaire. The data base for the pilot-study consisted of responses from 48 of the 62 institutions that reacted. These 48 institutions mailed a completed questionnaire, the remaining fourteen reacted in another way.

Since the nature of the institutions, the characteristics of the respondents, and the characteristics of the countries involved show some important differences, we have to make some reservations about the comparability of the responses. Because of this we would like to point out again the fact that the following findings are the results of a pilot-study. The purpose of this study was twofold. The first purpose was the enlargement of the knowledge base about the practice of institutional research in Western Europe. The second purpose was to gather information about the context of institutional research in Western Europe, that is to say about the external environment of the institution, especially the relationship with the central government, as well as about some internal processes of the institution. The results should serve as a starting-point for the next stages of the research-project and for the strategy that should be used in stimulating the development of institutional research as a profession and as an association in Western Europe.

FINDINGS

An analysis of the responses from the 48 institutions exhibited that almost half of these institutions were located in Denmark, the Netherlands or in the United Kingdom. From France as well as from Italy and Ireland only one institution returned a completed questionnaire. No questionnaires were received from Austria and Greece.
More than three-quarters of the respondents are administrative employees. Almost 90% of this group is member of the institutional administrative staff. One half of the remaining 25% are academics, the other half are executive officers. The indicated familiarity with the

literature on higher education showed no correlation with either background, function or national origin of the respondents. The nearly 40% who indicated to be familiar with the literature in question come from all over Western Europe, have various backgrounds and occupy different functions within their institutions.

The major activities, which at least 60 percent of the respondents indicated as being recently performed within their institution, are presented in table 1. The percentage of respondents indicating an activity on the list as one that was recently performed within their institution showed important fluctuations across the various countries. We will return to this aspect further on.

The number of professional staff-members concerned with the performed activities varies from country to country and from university to university. However, the statement "the larger the university, the larger the number of these professional staff-members" only holds when we look at individual countries. The statement does not hold when we take the whole sample of responding universities. The professional staff-members in question show all kinds of training-backgrounds. These backgrounds range from economics and social science to mathematics and science. There is no special training for institutional researchers in Western Europe.

More than half of the respondents indicated that the results of the performed activities were reported to the rector / the vice-chancellor / the president of the institution. The remaining group indicated that was reported to the university council and / or the university board, to the registrar or the other offices / officers. Approximately 90 percent of the respondents is of opinion that the offices or officers who performed the indicated activities should make policy recommandations to the executives of the institution along with their reports.

With respect to the opinions of the respondents about the possible role of institutional research in the Western European universities it is striking that the respondents were very positive about the possible role of institutional research in their own institution, as can be seen in table 2. They were also positive about the role institutional research could play inside Western European universities as part of a decision support system. The respondents reacted less positive to the statement about the link between on the one hand institutional research and on the other hand the organizational culture and the relationships with the government. According to most respondents there does not exist a negative attitude towards institutional research within the Western European institutional administrations at the moment. A majority of the respondents are of the opinion that institutional staff-members are increasingly interested in institutional research. These opinions

TABLE 1
Percentage of respondents
indicating an activity
as being performed within their institution

	Total	Higher Education Policy		
		1	2	3
	N=48	Expenditure-driven N=26	Transition Point N=14	Demand-led N=8
Institutional level planning	75%	85%	79%	38%
Projecting space requirements	75%	77%	79%	63%
Integration of academic and budgetary planning	73%	77%	71%	63%
Analysis of space needs/costs	71%	73%	71%	63%
Development of budget formulas	71%	88%	50%	50%
Planning strategies	67%	73%	71%	38%
Reallocation strategies	67%	73%	71%	38%
Data base development	67%	65%	79%	50%
Meeting external reporting needs	65%	65%	79%	38%
Implementation of planning processes	63%	65%	64%	50%
Analysis of resource utilization	63%	65%	71%	38%
Uses of microcomputers	63%	62%	64%	63%
Analysis of revenue/expenditure	63%	73%	50%	50%
Assessment of curricular needs	63%	65%	64%	50%
Goal setting	60%	58%	79%	38%

TABLE 2
Opinions of respondents
about the possible role of
Institutional Research in
Western European higher education

The seven statements following below were part of our questionnaire. The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion about the statements in the following manner:

STRONGLY AGREE = 1
AGREE = 2
NO OPINION = 3
DISAGREE = 4
STRONGLY DISAGREE = 5

Underneath each statement the mean of the scores and the standard deviation (S.D.) is given.

1. Institutional research could be a worthwile activity at your institution.

   Mean = 1.83; S.D. = 0.89

2. Many Western European universities are becoming increasingly competitive and as a result institutional performance, measured by an office for institutional research, will be a key-issue in due time.

   Mean = 2.50; S.D. = 0.99

3. Institutional research can play an important role as part of a decision support system in Western European universities, related to relevant issues in university management and the existing system of governance.

   Mean = 2.11; S.D. = 0.73

4. There is increasing interest by top-administrators and planners for institutional research.

   Mean = 2.48; S.D. = 0.97

5. Research on the institution's performance can be done independent of its organizational culture and relationships with government.

   Mean = 3.29; S.D. = 1.19

6. The organizational culture within the academic world in general and in the university administration in particular is such that institutional research is considered not only as useless but even as dangerous to daily practice.

   Mean = 3.18; S.D. = 0.97

7. A cooperation between Western European higher education institutions with respect to the establishment of institutional research should be supported by your institution.

   Mean = 2.28; S.D. = 0.87

indicate that the time is ripe for action. The circumstances seem to be favourable for an active stimulation of institutional research in Western Europe.

ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

We have described institutional research as an instrument in organizational adaptation. With respect to the environmental aspects of organizational adaptation, the relationship between higher education organizations and government is an important factor in shaping the adaptation processes and in determining the instruments used in these processes. As such this relationship is important for the state of affairs with respect to institutional research in higher education organizations. A basic force behind the relationship between higher education and government is the authority distribution within a higher education system. When we look at the classic national modes of authority distribution as described by Clark (1983) the difference between the modes of Continental Europe and the American mode is striking. In the Continental higher education systems authority was traditionally distributed over two groups, the senior professors and civil servants located in a state ministry. The middle-levels (i.e. institutional administrations) were weak and they could not develop into a powerful, autonomous third force within these systems. On the other hand the American mode has traditionally showed a strong middle-level. Senior professors could not achieve the influence their equivalents had in the Continental modes and the governmental level is the weakest level in this mode. These national modes were presented without nuance and details (Clark, 1983, pp 125 ff), but they exhibit an important force behind the difference in status institutional research achieved on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Western Europe the absence of an autonomous, professional, institutional administration, together with the battle for power between the governmental and academic levels of the various higher education systems, and the absence of a competitive element in higher education, entailed in the 1950s and 1960s a situation where despite growth and expansion hardly anybody was interested in the efficiency and the effectiveness of higher education. In these circumstances there could be no emergence of a separate administrative function like institutional research.

In the United States the emergence of institutional research was

initiated in the 1950s and 1960s at the middle-level of the system. Many institutional presidents and executives stimulated the establishment of institutional research offices on their campuses. The primary purpose of these offices was the gathering of data about all kinds of operations and characteristics of their institutions (Peterson, 1985, p 9). Like higher education in Western Europe, American higher education was growing at that time, but unlike their European equivalents the American institutions were growing in competitive conditions. In order to survive, the American institutions had to be interested in their effectiveness and their efficiency. So Rourke and Brooks could describe a managerial revolution and a subsequent growth of institutional research in American higher education (1966) at a time when in Western Europe most universities did not even have a beginning of a professional institutional administration.

The traditional authority distribution had important consequences for the nature of the dominant forces in the environment of higher education organizations. In Western Europe the state is the most powerful external force, in the United States a market-type of interaction dominates the relationship between a higher education institution and its environment. Clark (1983) has introduced a third type, describing a system in which an academic oligarchy is the most powerful factor in a system.

Of these three ideal-types only the market-type of exchange seems to provide a stimulating environment for institutional research. But this conclusion appears premature. Since at the moment there is a growing interest in institutional research in at least some Western European countries, and since on the other hand a characterization of the last five years of institutional research in North America is given in terms of fragmentation and uncertainty, the question rises whether the institutional environment has changed in Western Europe and North America. In the volume of New Directions for Institutional Research mentioned above (Peterson and Corcoran, 1985) the changing environment of institutional research in North America has been described.

The major environmental change for institutions in Western Europe has taken place in the relationship between the government and higher education. Since the Second World War the basis for the various Western European higher education policies was the concept of social demand (Neave, 1984). Anyone in society who was qualified, should get the opportunity to pursue his or her education at the highest possible level, irrespective of the expenses attended upon it. These expenses were carried by society as a whole. The State took care of the reservation of the resources for the demands of higher education.

Some important trends in the seventies marked the end of this period of Keynesian consensus in higher education policy. In the first place there is the economic crisis of this decade. The oil crisis of 1973 ment the

end of a period of unbridled economic growth and expansion. For the first time since 1945 a notion of the limits of the welfare state developed in Western Europe. In the second place all kinds of new public services and sectors emerged during the late 1960s and early 1970s as competitors for higher eduaction with respect to the resources of the State. In the third place higher education in Western Europe was more and more criticized because of the fact that it became clear that the way higher education performed its (political, social and economic) tasks was no longer in accordance with the high expectations society had of it in the 1960s.

This end of Keynesian consensus revealed in a number of Western European societies the release of the concept of social demand as the driving force behind higher education policy. On the basis of this we can group Western European countries into three categories. In the first category the higher education policy is still demand-led. This group consists of France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece. The second category is composed of countries where higher education policy is expenditure-driven. The United Kingdom, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden can be found in this category. The third category consists of countries standing at the transition point from demand-led to expenditure-driven policy. These countries are Ireland, the Federal Republic of Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Austria, and Finland.

When we put these categories next to the national modes of authority distribution described earlier, the countries where higher education policy is still demand-led show also still the traditional Continental mode of authority distribution. The absence of an independent middle-level, and a cautious equilibrium between the State and the professors exhibit a situation where the business side of higher education institutions is more or less neglected at the institutional level. The environment of the institutions is, in spite of the changes, still relatively stable. Organizational adaptation is for these institutions more a matter of reactive negotiations and lobbying than of actively used managerial skill.

In the expenditure-driven systems the authority distribution reveals a different picture. The professors have lost a great deal of their influence on the national higher eduaction policy. The strengthened middle-levels have to account more and more for the performance of their institutions. With the strengthening of the middle-levels the universities became more autonomous in their operations, and that entailed a more unstable and complex institutional environment. As a consequence, this environment will become more competitive in the years to come.

In the countries on the transition point the discussion between, broadly

speaking, the professors and the government, is still continuing. The Ministries of Finance want to reduce public expenditure in higher education, but several obstacles stand in the way of the government's possibilities to move over to a fully expenditure-driven policy (Neave, 1984, p 115).

The circumstances are of course in reality more complex than outlined above, but on the basis of these broad generalizations a first, tentative explanation can be given of the differences between institutions with respect to the nature and intensity of the institutional research activities that were performed within these institutions. Like in the United States the emergence of institutional research in Western Europe seems to be connected to the nature and strength of the middle-levels of the various higher education systems. But unlike in the United States this emergence is not accompanied by a situation of growth and expansion, but by a situation of retrenchement and reductions of student-numbers.

We will now look again at the data-base of the pilot-study to see if there are any signs of a link between environmental changes and the nature and intensity of performed institutional research activities.

THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND GOVERNMENT; FAVOURABLE FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH?

We will look again at some aspects of the data-base of the pilot-study in order to see if the changing relationships between higher education and governement in Western Europe have implications for institutional research as a field of practice, as a profesison and as our association in Western Europe. Despite the reservations about the comparability of the responses to the questionnaire, it is clear that there are differences with respect to the nature and the intensity of the performed activities between countries categorized as expenditure-driven and countries categorized as demand-led,as can be seen in table 1. The countries standing on the transition point seem to be showing more resemblance with the expenditure-driven countries than with the demand-led countries. There seems to be one major exception to this latter observation. At first sight the activities from the category we labeled as "Budget and Finance" are indicated as being performed to a greater extent in institutions in the expenditure-driven countries than in institutions in the other countries.

When looking at the settings of the performed activities some supplementary remarks can be made about the observation mentioned above.

The institutional administrations in the countries with an expenditure-driven higher education policy are relatively autonomous and powerful. In Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, the institutional administrators can be called professionals. Traditionally they were recruted from the academic staff and had all kinds of backgrounds. The majority of the recently appointed professionals have a background in Law, Economics or Business Administration. Most of them were not recruted from the own institutional academic staff but from outside. In the United Kingdom the middle-levels are as strongly developed as in three countries mentioned before, but traditionally the (top-)officers were more important than the offices. In Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden the situation is the reverse because traditionally, there were no strong (top-)officers in the middle-levels. In Belgium the environment seems to be more complex for the higher education institutions, because not only the relationship with government changes, but also the relationship with other important segments of the environments like the linguistic regions and the Church. But, despite that, the Belgian middle-levels have strengthened and the (actual) higher education policy can be called expenditure-driven at the moment. Like in the other four countries of this category, "Budget and Finance"-activities are performed within every institution. Every responding institution in this category has a separate Budget Office or Officer and a separate Office or Officer with planning as main task. There was one officer in the United Kingdom whose main task was circumscribed as institutional research. As far as we know he is the only institutional researcher in Western Europe. In the rest of the United Kingdom and in the other countries the institutional research activities were performed by an officer whose main task was <u>not</u> institutional research.

In the countries standing on the transition point the settings of the performed activities showed a more divers picture than in the expenditure-driven countries. Switzerland seems to be the country with the strongest middle-level, but the Swiss higher education system is unique in Western Europe. It is very difficult to compare it with the other systems, mainly because of the unique characteristics of the complex cantonal society. But also in the other countries of this category the institutional administrations are being strengthened. Among the main obstacles to moving over to a fully expenditure-driven higher education policy in the Federal Republic of Germany are on the one hand the law-guaranteed rights holders of the so-called Abitur have to a place in higher education, and on the other hand the strong influence the professors still have on the higher education policies in their country. Ireland is moving strongly towards an expenditure-driven model. Irish academics expect heavy retrenchement operations, despite the demographic pressure on higher education.

In the demand-led countries the changing demographic and financial circumstances seem to lead to a greater State-involvement in higher education. Middle-levels are still relatively weak and the indicated performed activities were on the one hand performed by or by order of the Ministry of Education or on the other hand by academics working in the departments. As long as the systems, dominated by a demand-led approach, appear to be, when compared to the other categories, relatively low-cost, the contest for power between governement and professors will, in the changing societal circumstances, certainly not lead to strong, autonomous institutional administrators. However, the changing circumstances could eventually create a situation, in which there is more attention for the business side of the higher education organizations. In a situation like that institutional research could get a foothold inside higher education organizations in countries with a demand-led higher education policy. In a next stage of our research-project we have to investigate if such a situation already develops in these countries, for at the moment we don't have enough information to draw a conclusion in that direction.

CONCLUSION

What conclusions can be drawn from the changing environmental circumstances of higher education organizations for the development of institutional research as a field of practice, as a profession and as an association in Western Europe?

With respect to the practice of institutional research it can be concluded that a lot of institutional research activities are performed, but not in an organized manner. The function of these activities is in most cases the support of institutional decision-making or planning processes, but these activities are not (yet) recognized as a separate institutional function. The main task of the persons who performed the activities is a different one than institutional research. Because of that, institutional research is in Western European higher education systems diveded not only horizontally among various offices of the institutional administrations, but also vertically among the three broad levels of the higher education systems. The type of studies and the methods used resemble the type of studies and methods used in institutional research activities in North America, but the organizational and structural settings differ. They differ the most in

Western European countries were higher education policies are demand-led. In the countries with expenditure-driven policies an emergence of institutional research seems to have taken place, but the step towards institutionalization of this function must still be made.

From the preceeding it will be clear that in Western European higher education there is no professional group of institutional researchers. The Western European institutional administrators, who are interested in institutional research, can recognize in some cases something in for instance the presentations during the AIR forums of the North American institutional research profession and in the literature about institutional research, but this recogniztion relates only partly to their own activities.

To stimulate the development of an institutional research profession in Western Europe the European AIR affiliation has to start with the enlargement of the knowledge about institutional research among the people in charge in the universities in the expenditure-driven countries and in the countries standing on the transition point. This has got to go together with the starting of a Western European higher education management and institutional research training. The European AIR forums could start, like the American AIR forums, with special workshops for the interested institutional administrators. When institutional research is recognized as a separate administrative function in the higher education systems of the countries with expenditure-driven higher education policies, it is meaningful to try to stimulate the development of institutional research in the demand-led European higher education systems. Because of the many obstacles (e.g. language!) that go together with a stimulation of institutional research in these countries, it might be useful first to try to get some relevant people from these countries (that can be institutional administrators, but also academics or officials working in the Ministries of education) interested in institutional research, by inviting them for instance to the European AIR forums.

The time seems ripe for the stimulation of institutional research in Western Europe, this chance should not be missed.

NOTE

1. The countries in question are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom.

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